

PARENT COUNSELING

Parents of children with hearing loss can be both fragile and durable people. When children are initially identified as having a hearing loss and amplification is recommended, parents may undergo significant stress and a change of perception regarding their child. Upon confirmation of hearing loss, the parent is advised to undertake a dizzying list of things to do physically, emotionally, and financially.

The parents are the primary educators of the extended family. Their comfort level concerning management of the hearing loss creates a strong signal regarding how the family will react to the new information, necessary behavioral interventions and acceptance of the equipment. Each new contact with the parents builds on past counseling and informational techniques.

When counseling parents, keep in mind the stages of grief and change. Acknowledge the emotions of the parents and realize that their intake of information has been impaired to some degree. Therefore, keep your summary of the evaluation simple. Restate the situation and make an appropriate referral to an otologist. Write a brief outline of follow-up events for the parent. Include what you will be doing as the audiologist and provide telephone and fax numbers. Also provide handouts and booklets which will answer those unspoken questions from the visit. Reassure parents that you and other members of the team will be available for future questions and concerns.

Additionally, orientation of the amplification device should be part of the follow-up counseling sessions. Parents may be counseled on the following issues: insertion and care of the earmold, checking the hearing aid settings, changing the batteries, and performing listening checks. This will increase their comfort level with the equipment.

Parent counseling is an essential component of successful audiological management for preschool and school age children.